

Washington, DC – The bipartisan House Hurricane Irene Coalition, which is co-chaired by Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), today sent a letter to U.S. House leaders urging immediate action to provide critical disaster assistance funding. At a press conference, Hinchey and Coalition members outlined the scope of damage to their districts, the recovery efforts underway, and the need for urgent action by Congress to ensure federal resources are available.

In the letter to Speaker John Boehner and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Hinchey and 39 of the coalition members urged the leaders to ensure FEMA has the funds it needs to pay for recovery efforts in states affected by Hurricane Irene. The White House has estimated the cost of Irene to be \$1.5 billion. The letter was signed by 28 Democrats and 12 Republicans.

"Countless families are currently living in shelters while they wait to hear if they'll even have a home to return to. None of them are interested in seeing more gridlock in Washington," said Hinchey. "None of the farmers who lost their crops and livestock are focused on debates over deficits and offsets. And the entrepreneurs who just lost their small businesses don't want to see us play politics. They need help. They need action, and they need it right now. That's the message this coalition is sending. That's why we've written to house leaders. And that's why, as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I'm going to do everything I can to deliver the funds we so desperately need."

Hinchey was one of the first in Congress to call for additional appropriations to assist those affected by Hurricane Irene, and now Tropical Storm Lee. In an August 29 press release, Hinchey said "congressional action will also be necessary to increase funding for the President's Disaster Relief fund." Today, that fund contains less than \$500 million and is set to run into the red unless congress takes action by the end of the month.

Hinchey has also worked to deliver the federal disaster declarations New Yorkers need to receive the federal assistance they need. Last week, Hinchey spoke with FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate to request expedited Major Disaster Declarations for New York counties affected by Tropical Storm Lee. Prior to that, Hinchey requested Federal Emergency Declarations for six New York counties affected by Lee. The designation was subsequently granted, making federal resources available to mitigate flood damage, save lives, protect property and public infrastructure, and ensure public health and safety. Hinchey has also introduced legislation and has been working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expedite and provide additional assistance to farmers affected by the flooding, and is supportive of efforts to provide crop

insurance retroactively to New York farmers in need.

The Hurricane Irene Coalition is a bipartisan group of members whose districts were affected by the storm. It has two purposes: First, to ensure FEMA has the resources it needs to support the recovery effort. Second, to work with FEMA and other federal agencies and serve as a resource for members to support recovery efforts in their districts.

The full text of the letter is copied below. Signers include Welch (D-Vt.), Butterfield (D-N.C.), Jones (R-N.C.), Scott (D-Va.), Sarbanes (D-Md.), Ruppersberger (D-Md.), Carney (D-Del.), Meeks (D-N.Y.), Pascrell (D-N.J.), Holt (D-N.J.), Nadler (D-N.Y.), Lowey (D-N.Y.), Hinchey (D-N.Y.), Owens (D-N.Y.), Hayworth (R-N.Y.), Gibson (R-N.Y.), Hanna (R-N.Y.), Tonko (D-N.Y.), Courtney (D-Conn.), DeLauro (D-Conn.), Murphy, (D-Conn.), Olver (D-Mass.), Neal (D-Mass.), Fattah (D-Pa.), Brady (D-Pa.), Meehan (R-Penn.), Marino (R-Penn.), Barletta (R, Penn.), Schwartz (D-Penn.), Langevin (D-R.I.), Grimm (R-N.Y.), Pitts (R-Penn.), McCarthy (D-N.Y.), Lance (R-N.J.), Pallone (D-N.J.), Himes (D-Conn.), Cicilline (D-R.I.), Bishop (D-N.Y.), Harris (R-Md.), Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.)

Dear Speaker Boehner and Democratic Leader Pelosi,

As members of the Hurricane Irene Coalition, we respectfully request your leadership in ensuring FEMA and the other federal agencies involved in the relief and recovery efforts have the funds necessary to fulfill their mission in response to Hurricane Irene.

Early estimates put the cost of Irene in the billions. Relentless rain, flooding and wind devastated our communities and took the lives of at least 44 people in 13 states. Meanwhile, the costs of flooding from Tropical Storm Lee are just beginning to mount.

While our constituents are working to get back on their feet, they cannot do it alone. Please provide funding that ensures the swift recovery of the families, farms and businesses in our districts.

Sincerely,

Maurice Hinchey

Member of Congress

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